



# Tajikistan School Connectivity Project

## NEWSLETTER

Issue #18, June-August 2005

The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia has established 24 Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in secondary schools across Tajikistan. The program's main goal is to increase global dialogue and educational opportunities by installing modern computer equipment with Internet access in schools, as well as developing training and learning projects for teachers and students.

**Tajikistan School Connectivity Project activities include:**

- teacher training on using computers and the Internet in classroom teaching
- US school partnerships on civic education projects and teacher exchange
- public access and programs for community members and disadvantaged groups
- development of sustainable practices for schools and communities

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Dear friends,

Congratulations to all for the successful Connectivity program and for the start of the new Global Connections and Exchange Program! My first involvement with the program started early last year, working from the office in Los Angeles and only being able to imagine what Tajikistan is like. And now over a year later, here I am – lucky to be in a beautiful country with sincere people and still part of a fantastic program.

I am very much looking forward to spending the next year with you all. Please always feel free to approach and contact me with your questions and ideas about the program, about the U.S., about anything. Tajikistan is now my home and I hope we can all share and work together to continue a meaningful program for all. I am certain the next two years will bring great skills and close friendships to many, and hope that you will all join the RI-SOL family!

Sincerely,  
Susie Chang  
Program Director

As the new Education Coordinator I am glad to greet all the students and teachers who will be with us in the next two years. First of all I would like to congratulate all of you with the extension of our program that is now called the Global Connections and Exchange Program (GCEP).

For the next two years we will be working with you on different educational projects. The students will participate in partnership projects as they did before. Moreover there will be national long-term projects and different contests for ILC students. Additionally, a pleasant surprise of the new program is that besides a Teacher Exchange we will also have an exchange program with the U.S. for the most active students of our ILCs.

As for the teachers they will have a chance to develop teaching modules and share it with other educators through the Internet.

So, as you can see there will be a variety of interesting activities for you. As usual, you can read the latest news and events happening in our ILCs through our monthly newsletter. Feel free to submit ideas for articles as well!

Sincerely,  
Gulshan Toshbekova  
Education Coordinator

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*The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia is a project of Relief International - Schools Online's Global Citizenship & Youth Philanthropy Program and has been made possible with major funding from the United States State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Global Catalyst Foundation*

## Closing of Connectivity Program and Opening of Global Connections and Exchange Program

Two years of the School Connectivity Program are behind us. What has been done during this time? To list all the achievements would take a lot of time, but in general we can say that the goals of the Connectivity Program were achieved and even more work was done than was planned.



*Internet gives an opportunity to see the world...*

The two years of the Connectivity Program has greatly changed the life of each boy and girl of our ILCs. The Internet has showed them the possibilities to improve their education, made them more literate, eager to learn new things, debate, express their point of view, and allowed them to make a lot of new friends. In general their world vision has changed and expanded. For our teachers the Internet led to the integration of new interactive methods with the classroom. It allows them to find through the Internet many materials and innovative teaching methodologies that make their lessons more colorful.

On September 1st, 2005 RI-SOL's new program began - Global Connections and Exchange Program. Let's welcome it and wish success and long life for this program.

### Internet for the Islamic world

We warmly welcome the 25th ILC that was opened by RI-SOL in the Islamic University of Tajikistan. It is a special project financed by the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan. The U.S. Ambassador Richard Hoagland, representatives from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan, rector of the university and RI-SOL all participated in the opening ceremony on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005. This ILC will help students of the Islamic University reveal the potential of the Internet and use it for the benefit of their education. As U.S. Ambassador Richard Hoagland remarked, the center will "help build links with American Islamic schools to promote a better understanding among our communities".



*Welcome speech of U.S. Ambassador at the opening ceremony*

### Our partners – Junior Achievement and Ittifoq



*JA is handing certificates to training participants*

By August 2005 trainings on economics and entrepreneurship conducted by one of our partner NGOs, Junior Achievement, were conducted at all of our 24 ILCs. These were trainings for teachers of Economics in our ILC schools.

Ittifoq will accomplish its activity in September this year. This will be series of exchange visits between communities and schools of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Since the beginning of the partnership Ittifoq has conducted trainings on conflict resolution for teachers of our schools.

### Announcement for GCEP logo:

Design the new GCEP logo! You can submit your works in any size (ex.8x10, 3x3, 1x2); 300dpi or greater resolution; designed in either Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, or InDesign; saved as PSD, AI, or Indd file; Grayscale or color

The deadline for submission is November 1st, 2005. Selection of winners will be done by November 7th, 2005 – prizes go to the first, second and third places.



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## Connectivity Students Participate in the First Youth Leadership Summer Camp

During one month starting from July 8, the most active students of the Connectivity Program for Tajikistan had a chance to spend their holidays at the first RI-SOL Youth Leadership Summer Camp.

Youth Leadership Camp gave 103 students from 24 ILCs across Tajikistan an excellent opportunity to learn leadership skills, know more about U.S. culture and history and improve their English.

The very first day of the camp brought a pleasant surprise for camp participants. The U.S. Ambassador Richard Hoagland greeted the future leaders of the Global Connections Program and wished them success and high achievements at leadership camp.



*Students welcome their friends returning from the nature trek*



*Connectivity students celebrate their football victory*

To conduct program trainings the camp involved our enthusiastic On-Site Educators from different ILCs and English teachers that have participated in the Teacher Exchange Program last year. Perhaps the greatest examples of youth leadership were the young trainers - FLEX students that played an important role in camp activities. As one of the main goals of the summer camp was to prepare leaders for the next two years of the Global Connections and Exchange Program in Tajikistan, FLEX alumni were a true and excellent example of young leaders. At the same time FLEX students fulfilled the second goal of Youth Leadership Camp: introducing students to American culture and history. They made presentations about the school system, higher education in the U.S. and the life of American teenagers.

To practice and improve the English of our students, FLEX alumni conducted their trainings in English. During breaks FLEX alumni would conduct very interesting energizers and different entertainment games which were full of fun.

Besides leadership trainings and lectures on U.S. culture students had other entertainment activities. As the camp was conducted in two different regions of Tajikistan – one in Kayrakkum and another in Gissar, the participants of the latter camp had a trek to the mountains and were taught by a group of local alpinists basic mountain and climbing skills.

Students of Kayrakkum camp participated in a cruise around Kayrakkum sea.



*Trainings on youth leadership*



*Trek in the mountains of Gissar*

During the ten days of the summer camp students received very important and interesting knowledge about leadership such as how to become a good leader, roles of a leader, speaking skills, conflict resolution and other skills which will help them to become future leaders for our ILCs and the country in general.



## A Helping Hand

Earlier in the year, RI-SOL announced a proposal writing contest to the ILCs.

The focus of the proposals was about how to make our community a better place to live through helping the school and members of the community. The deadline for the contest was the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. There were 7 proposals submitted. All of them were very well written, and the independent selection committee worked hard on choosing the top proposals. The best three proposals were selected. These are from Isfara School #1, Gissar School #2 and Gulyakandoz School #16.

Below you will find out how the proposal was implemented by one of the winners - SAC from Isfara School #1.

After having visited the local orphanage on Global Youth Service Day, the Student Action Committee in Isfara city School #1 wrote a proposal **"A helping hand to Orphans"**.

They wanted to bring more joy and help to children by inviting them into their Internet Learning Center and giving them basic knowledge about the Internet, discussing some of the benefits of a democratic society, and teaching them that WE – the youth – are the future of our country.

The idea of the proposal was to let children know that they aren't alone in this world. Though their parents are not near, it doesn't mean that nobody cares for them anymore. There are organizations, and people that do care about them. So the SAC not only held trainings and led brainstorming sessions, but also had games and snacks to give a fun time to the children and invite them to new friendships!

Trainings included:

1. Life of today's students
2. Designing a project
3. Knowledge of foreign language today
4. Most famous schools in Tajikistan
5. Role of NGOs in the country
6. We, the Youth – the future of Tajikistan



*First lesson on democracy for orphans from Isfara*

## Student Action Committee Fair

The SAC Fair was held by IFES on 28-29 of July in the beautiful place in Varzob, which is called "Guli mayda". All presidents and potential leaders of the SAC including some adult mentors from all over the country were invited to this event. 19 SAC Presidents and potential leaders from schools with RI-SOL ILCs actively participated and gave presentations exhibiting their best projects.



*Opening ceremony of SAC fair*

After voting on the best presentations, SAC President from Khorog won second place and SAC President from Jabor Rasulov took first place and both received prizes useful for the future work of the SAC.

Not only competitions and presentations were in the program, but also different activities for participants, which helped them to get to know each other better. Also, trainings on Democracy and Leadership were taught to participants. Thanks to this Fair, SAC presidents and their potential leaders also had a great opportunity to discuss their work in the committee and their shared successes and struggles, and improve their skills as young leaders.



*Students presenting their best projects*

## Summer in Tajikistan: Hot Weather, Hot Contests

Summer is generally the time to rest and search for new and interesting things. To keep our students involved and active during summer time, RI-SOL conducted two contests for the ILC students. These contests sought to find the best artists in computer graphics and the best chess players.

Both contests took place in August and captured the interests of our students. Participants in the Computer Graphics competition sent in several beautiful and amazing graphics which were created in Paint software, a skill learned through trainings in the ILCs. The high number and variety of impressive submissions reflected the popularity of the activity, and made it nearly impossible to choose only 3 winners. This difficulty was also noted by the judge itself – Ms. Manzura Uljabaeva, teacher from the Art College in Dushanbe. However, the rules of the contest required selecting the best ones, and the judge eventually decided between all the fantastic pieces of art and announced the following three winners:

1st Prize – Sadi Anvarzoda from Gissar

2nd Prize – Sayli Narzulloeva from Nurek

3rd Prize – Suhrob Kurbonov from Jabor Rasulov

After the first contest of exhibiting the talent for art, ILC students were invited to participate in another competition to challenge the ability of the mind. During one week students from 24 ILCs had to demonstrate their ability as chess players. In order to achieve that they needed to work hard and be extra patient because the championship was conducted in an untraditional way – it was all online. After long and difficult battles of the most strategic minds the following chess masters emerged victorious:

1st Place – Shamshod Yuldoshev from Sarband

2nd Place – Akmal Shomadov from Rudaki

3rd Place – Bahtovar Ismoilzoda from Gissar

Our best wishes and warm congratulations to all the winners and participants! As the proverb says: it is better to have participated and not won, than to have never participated at all!



*Online chess contest participant*

## Tajikistan Teachers Develop Their Professional Skills



*Seminar by Dr. Farooq Babrakzai for RRS English teachers*

Despite the fact that summer is the time for holidays and vacation, hardworking teachers dedicated their time to learn how to improve their teaching skills. In July, such an opportunity was kindly provided by the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan which invited an English specialist, Dr. Farooq Babrakzai, to conduct seminars for English teachers and to share his experience through an online forum.

On July 6th On-Site Educators and English teachers from the ILCs and neighboring schools participated in an online forum to discuss the main issues of teaching methods with Dr. Farooq Babrakzai – Senior Fellow at Beijing Normal University of the U.S. Department of State English Language Exchange Program.

During the 2 hour-long online forum Dr. Babrakzai shared his experience and gave advice to English teachers from different regions of Tajikistan. Many questions arose such as: what are the differences between the education system in Tajikistan and

other countries, how can teachers motivate students, how can teachers teach English when lacking teaching materials, what strategies can be used to develop students' speaking skills and grammar, and many others. When Mr. Babrakzai was asked about the most effective way to learn English he answered: "Remember: learning is by doing. You cannot learn to swim by reading books or watching people swim. You must jump in and struggle to swim. Learning English is the same."

It was obvious that 2 hours were not enough to answer all the questions, and Dr. Babarakzai promised to reply to teachers' questions and send some of his handouts.

The next day Dr. Babrakzai conducted a 2 hour seminar for other school teachers. Teachers from Sarband, Kurgan-Tyube, Kulob and Vahsh attended the seminar in the Vahsh ILC, while teachers from RRS attended the seminar arranged in Dushanbe ILC of School#10. At his workshop Dr. Babrakzai addressed assessments of student performance.

The new and useful knowledge acquired during these two days not only improved the teachers' skills, but will also be sure to help them in their future work in improving the skills of students.

## Connectivity Program Through the Eyes of School Principals

This summer on August 22, RI-SOL gathered all 24 principals of secondary schools that host Internet Learning Centers. It was an inclusive meeting in Dushanbe with active participation of school principals, RI-SOL, and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Farkhod Rakhimov, Deputy Minister of Education, congratulated principals with the beginning of the upcoming school year and wished them success in their hard work. He spoke of the plan of the MOE to strengthen the education system in Tajikistan, and recognized the importance of the Connectivity Program in the country with its commitment to improving the teaching and learning process in our schools.

Susie Chang, new Program Director, discussed the results of the initial 2-year School Connectivity Program and presented the goals and objectives of the Global Connections and Exchange Program for 2005-2007.

Talking about the first 2 years of the program, principals emphasized the great support and influence of the Connectivity Program on their schools, students and teachers. The Connectivity Program brought many changes into the life of the schools and communities. It improved the quality of education at schools, gave students an opportunity to unlock the whole world, learn a variety of things through the Internet, make friends and grow as individuals and leaders. As for the teachers, Connectivity helped them to find educational materials and utilize new methods of teaching that make their classes more interesting. They discovered new ways of using computers and the Internet in their classes.

The participating sides of the meeting also discussed methods to effectively use ICT in the education system, ways to make the ILCs sustainable, and ideas for successful implementation of the new GCEP Program.

At the conclusion, principals celebrated the extension of the Program and expressed their gratitude and readiness for continued fruitful cooperation with RI-SOL.



*School principals gather together in support of new program*

## GCEP: Success in the Making



*ILC Managers discussing plans for upcoming year*

The very first national Training-of-Trainers (TOT) for field staff of RI-SOL was conducted on August 24-26, 2005. The TOT gave ILC Managers the opportunity to meet their colleagues who up until this meeting had only known each other online, and served as a training and planning session to jumpstart another successful two years.

The Global Connections and Exchange Program will offer more education activities both for students and teachers in more specific ways. During the next two years we will create more educational content that will be placed on the website and made accessible to interested educators and motivated students. ILC project groups who are partnered with the U.S. will also be joined by four clubs: Youth Leadership, English, Web Designers/Programmers, and Art/Photography.

The participants of TOT discussed the goals and objectives of the Global Connections and Exchange Program, contributed to interactive planning sessions, and conferred about the best ways to implement the program for the coming two years.

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